

THE INOFFENSIVE MINISTRY DESCRIBED,

IN

A S E R M O N,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE C O N V E N T I O N

OF THE

C L E R G Y

OF

MASSACHUSETTS,

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THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SOCIETY OF ANTHROPOLOGISTS

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FOR THE YEAR 1881

IN THE MONTH OF JANUARY

AND FEBRUARY

OF THE YEAR 1881



A S E R M O N, &c.

II. CORINTHIANS, VI. 3, 4.

*GIVING NO OFFENCE, IN ANY THING, THAT THE
MINISTRY BE NOT BLAMED ; BUT IN ALL
THINGS APPROVING OURSELVES AS
THE MINISTERS OF GOD.*

WHILE these words are characteristic of the Apostles, they hold up to view, a fair copy for all their successors to write after.

It is a noble attainment, for the Ministers of Christ, to be able to say, (upon serious recollection) we have given no just offence *in any thing*, but, in the discharge of the duties of our office, we have *in all things* approved ourselves as the Ministers of God. Indeed, it is a point, at which every professing Christian should aim ; to be so prudent and circumspect in all their deportment, that the prejudices of unbelievers might be removed, and no stumbling block thrown in the way of the humble believer.

WE shall attempt from this text to point out and inculcate the duty recommended herein, which is a fair, innocent, and inoffensive conduct, both in the discharge of the public offices of the ministry, and in the duties of the private Christian. It may not be possible, always so to preach and so to act, as that none shall take offence, for our Saviour said, it is impossible but that offences will come, but woe to him who shall give just ground of offence.

AND though our Lord set his Ministers and followers a perfect pattern of good conduct, “yet many were offended : And the servant is not above his

master, nor the disciple above his Lord :” And the Apostles with all their plenitude of inspiration, found it impossible always to preach and conduct, in such a manner that no one should be offended, at any time ; nor indeed can we expect it, for the gospel we preach is in itself a stumbling block, and a rock of offence to an ignorant and unbelieving world. Such is the nature of our office, the design of christianity, and the present state of human nature, that the most faithful and prudent discharge of the duties of the ministry, will give offence ; so various and opposite are the tastes, the humours and the prejudices of mankind, that what is agreeable to some will be offensive to others. And though the condescending Apostle “ became all things “ (lawful) to all men, that he might gain the more, yet “ many were offended,” traduced him, representing him, as a “ babler, as a madman,” one who had made great confusion and in a manner “ turned the world up side down.” Therefore to please *all* will be impossible, and to attempt it farther than is consistent with our fidelity would be sinful. It is evident therefore by this christian caution recommended from our text, and the example of the Apostles, we are to understand nothing more than *this*, That we give no just cause of offence, but that we discharge the duties of our office with honor, prudence and fidelity ; which, if I mistake not, implies, 1st, That our lives and conversation are inoffensive ; that in all company and at all times, we support the character of the ministers of Christ, and ambassadors from God to men, charged “ with the ministry of reconciliation.”

Our station is conspicuous and exposes us to a very critical inspection, and the same allowance will not be made for our miscarriages as for other men. Our hearers will hardly allow us to be subject to the same passions and infirmities with others ; they are ready to judge of our persons by the nature of our office ; we can never persuade our people, by all the flowers

of rhetoric, or the force of argument, that we are either in earnest or sincere in our warmest addresses, unless we form our lives according to those doctrines of godliness we preach to them ; and our ministry, however zealously the public offices may be discharged, will sink into contempt and be blamed.

THERE is a sort of natural eloquence in a godly life, which, when joined to a faithful discharge of the duties of our public station, cannot be resisted. If it does not change the heart, it will better the life, and support the honor of the gospel ministry.

It is not enough that we avoid only what is directly immoral, but we must be exemplary, "recommending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." If for instance we venture to the utmost boundary of what is lawful : If we often join the gay circle, and sit long, where the sparkling glass passes in quick succession : Or if we join in those fashionable amusements of the day, which, though, when abstracted from their tendency and consequences, may not be direct immoralities, yet are quite out of character for us, and can never be indulged by us, without giving offence, and reflecting blame on the ministry. Or when we mix in company, (as it is sometimes necessary and prudent that we should,) then we should render ourselves free, easy, and agreeable to all, and make every one as easy and happy as we can ; yet if we say nothing which may distinguish us from the private christian ; nothing which may support our character, as the Ministers of God, nothing which may instruct, excite a useful thought, or minister godly edifying, but indulge a vein of levity, as if it were our main business to make men *laugh*, and divert the mind from, rather than call up the attention to, the most interesting concerns of life, we shall give offence, and all that we can say from the pulpit about devotion of heart, spiritual mindedness, self denial and weanedness from the world, and a life of

faith, prayer and repentance, will stand for nothing ; and the world will conclude, that we view the work of the ministry as our trade, which is chiefly if not wholly to be pursued on what *they* call *Sundays*. In short, if we spend more time in company, diversions, and amusements, than we do in retirement, study, meditation and prayer, we shall give the world room to suspect, that something else is dearer to us than the glory of God, the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the salvation of man, and many will be offended, and the ministry will be blamed.

BUT on the other hand, it is perfectly in character that we appear in the world, as men, formed with the same passions, the same affections, and feelings with other men, distinguished only by our office, for public use ; remembering that we are sinful men, but called to minister in holy things ; that we are social beings, and can relish the pleasures of society and the delights of friendship, as highly as any men ; but while we give way to all the fine feelings of humanity and social life, we must ever act in character as Ministers of God, and support the honor and promote the beneficent design of the gospel ministry which we have received of the Lord, giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed. Therefore,

2dly, WE must make Jesus Christ and the distinguishing doctrines of his gospel our capital point in preaching. If instead of the pure gospel, we should preach for doctrines the commandments of men, or the refinements of philosophy, or empty speculation ; or if we puzzle our hearers with new schemes of divinity, or old ones new vamped, though long ago exploded, because not supported by scripture evidence ; or if supported at all, yet only by some detached passages, forced by an unnatural interpretation, to speak in favour of the newly adopted system, we shall give offence and the ministry will be blamed ; for we have not so learned of Christ. He spake as never man

spake both as to the matter and the manner. He, indeed, used great plainness of speech, with an artless, unaffected eloquence, joined with a certain dignity of style which astonished those who heard him, for he spake as one having authority and not as the scribes.

3dly, Nor must we preach ourselves. If we should aim at acquiring fame for critical learning, pointed eloquence or the nice arrangement of words, we shall give offence and the ministry will be blamed. Very different from this was the manner of St. Paul, who claims rank as an exemplary preacher next to Him who is the Apostle and high-priest of our profession. Though he had a liberal education, a plenary inspiration, and received some finishing strokes in the third heavens, yet he came to the polite and learned city of Corinth with this determination, not to know any thing save Jesus Christ, even Him who was crucified. *i. e.* He was determined to make Jesus Christ and the doctrines of the cross, his capital point in preaching; these engrossed his whole soul, and elevated his independent mind above the rules of art; the enticing words of mens' wisdom or the exact balancing of his periods.* Sometimes he breaks loose from the rules of grammar and commits a solecism in language, that he might the better express the sense he had of the riches of that grace which had marked him out and commissioned him to preach the glorious gospel of the blessed God; therefore we hear him expressing himself in that singular manner, "to me, who am *less than the least* of all Saints is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." And he at all times maintained a noble indifference to the breath of human applause. He sought

* In the beginning of his Epistle to the Ephesians, in the midst of his salutations, before he had closed his benevolent wish for grace, mercy and peace, he incidentally fell upon the name of Jesus, his soul took fire at once, and he is borne away with a torrent of artless eloquence, into a rapturous anthem of praise, and does not give himself time to take breath until he had finished twelve long verses.

not his own reputation as a scholar, a correct speaker, or a learned critic, yet he on the other hand, always guarded against a low, grovelling or slovenly style, as every public speaker should, who would not offend in any thing.

As the subject of the gospel is noble, so the Apostle's style was manly and masterly. A pious critic has compared it to "a natural grove abounding with every kind of tree, standing in artless order, and in beautiful confusion."*

4th, As we must not undertake, so we must not carry on the ministry, with a view principally to promote our secular interest, if we would not offend in any thing. So much as will render our outward circumstances easy, and enable us to be patterns of hospitality, we have a right to expect from those we serve in the gospel of God's dear Son: "for the workman is worthy of his hire." But they who make the church of God, a porch to the temple of mammon, or the *round* on which they may ascend the *ladder* of ecclesiastical preferment, or a field of blood that they might enrich themselves with the spoils, give just cause of offence, the ministry is blamed, and the beneficent design of the gospel is obstructed.

THE Apostles forsook all to follow a master who had not where to lay his head: the sacrifice indeed, with most of them was *small*, yet it was their *all*; with St. Paul it was considerable; he gave up the fairest prospects of worldly honor and emolument, for the nobler prospects of Christianity, and could say amidst reproaches and persecutions, "What things were gain to me I count loss for Christ, yea, doubtless I do account all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do account them but dung that I might win Christ."

* DODDRIDGE.

BEING impressed with our subject, we must study to be plain ; the Apostles with all their inspiration made use of great plainness of speech : When they addressed their hearers, they did not use “ the word of “ *God craftily.*” The gospel trumpet must not give an *uncertain sound* ; the inspired prophets and apostles made but one *report*, and it is our business to instruct, not to confuse and perplex. It is our business to shew our hearers the way to life, and lead them in the paths of truth and peace. And that we may do this, we must guard against an ambiguous, a too metaphorical or enigmatical style, which may convey different or indistinct ideas, and throw the plain and the most interesting truths of the gospel into the shade. We must speak as the *lively oracles* of God; and address our hearers as men, rational, conscious beings, candidates for immortality, and confirm the truths we inculcate by arguments drawn from the sacred text, and the nature and reason of things, adapted to the capacities of our hearers, and agreeable to the dictates of common sense ; or as the pious and learned Doddridge expressed himself on this subject. “ When we speak “ in the name and presence of God, to immortal crea- “ tures on the borders of eternity, I hope, said he, we “ entertain them with plain, serious, and animated dis- “ courses, on the most important doctrines of Christi- “ anity, in their order and connection, in such a man- “ ner, as on mature deliberation, we verily believe, “ may have the most happy tendency to produce and “ promote in their hearts the work of regeneration, “ faith and holy obedience.” And give me leave to say, if we would have the truths we deliver carry conviction home to the heart, and become effectual to salvation, we should make a reverent, pertinent, but frequent mention in our sermons of that dear and venerable name THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. His name has no charm or magic in it, but it is, as precious ointment poured forth ; it carries a sort of frag-

rancy in the very found, and diffuses divine energy into the truths connected with it. Therefore, a frequent, reverent and pertinent use made of it in our sermons will give a sanction to them, in proportion as they are adorned with his name, supported by his authority, and enriched with his truths; they will in general become more acceptable, and therefore the more likely to become the power of God to salvation to all them who believe. “It was Paul’s manner to
 “go into the synagogue on every Sabbath day and
 “to reason out of the scriptures, proving and alleg-
 “ing that Jesus was the Christ.” This was with him a capital point, at which all the rays of evangelical truths met as in their common center.

If we would not offend in any thing but in all things approve ourselves as the Ministers of God, we must inculcate upon our hearers his being, perfections and government. The divine, the human, and the mediatorial characters of the Lord Jesus Christ; the nature, the necessity and efficacy of the operations of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of men, in forming them to the obedience of the gospel. But in speaking of these sublime and mystical truths with which the system of Christianity is closely connected, we should be careful not to speak “in the enticing words
 “of mens’ wisdom, but in the words which the Holy
 “Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with
 “spiritual.” If we should attempt to divest revealed truths of all mystery, we shall soon lose ourselves and mislead those who hear us, and give just cause of offence, and the ministry will be blamed.

THE christian revelation is the living testimony of God, we are therefore bound to receive and admit every truth therein declared, upon divine authority. Revealed truths being above our comprehension, is no reason why we should not believe them; in this case our “faith stands not in the wisdom of men, but
 “on the testimony of God, and let God be true if

"every man is a liar." The *how* or the *why* of the *mode* and the *manner* of revealed truths, we are not yet informed. Any attempt to explain the modes will be vain, because we see not "as God seeth, and know" but in part and can therefore prophesy but in "part."

THE redemption of fallen man by Jesus Christ as revealed in the gospel is a great mystery, and various parts of it are to us, for the present, incomprehensible; but this proves christianity to be true rather than false; for, could it be fully comprehended by us in all its parts, there would be much more reason to suspect that it was some "cunningly devised fable." But a little attention to the christian system will open to the eye, which is single, to the honest, discerning, and unprejudiced mind, the undeniable marks of infinite wisdom, truth and goodness. When therefore we treat of those sublime doctrines and revealed truths, which go into and are essential parts of that amazing plan of wisdom and grace which originated in the divine councils, revealed in the fulness of time and terminate in the eternal world, we must be careful that we do not darken council by words without knowledge. So far as they are doctrines of pure revelation they must be received entirely upon the authority of the sacred scriptures, and received in the simple form of sound words by which they are revealed. We have no better words to express them in, or medium through which we may convey our ideas of them, and if we attempt to explain them better in words of human device, we shall perplex our hearers, give offence, and the ministry will be blamed, for to the law, and to the testimony, if we speak not according to them there is no light but what like the *ignis fatuus* will mislead us and them.

In one word, we should ever delight to display the infinite wisdom, power and grace of God, which "bringeth salvation, and which hath appeared unto

“all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and
 “worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously
 “and godly in this present world, looking for the
 “blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great
 “God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

OUR subject affords us a variety of weighty considerations, motives and arguments to engage us to practice the Christian prudence, caution and fidelity recommended in our text, and enforced by the example of the apostles ; as,

1. THE cause we are engaged to support, in the inoffensive manner recommended in our text, is the most glorious and extensive which ever was, or ever can be brought into view. Christianity comes like its blessed author, to bless the world with peace and truth, with righteousness and salvation : And Jesus the “author and finisher of our faith,” has left the honor and the defence of his gospel in our hands, and we are bound to defend it as he left it ; not as it has been corrupted, mutilated and palmed upon a credulous world by artful and designing men. We must learn the gospel from Christ, repair to his standard, not insist under the banner of any other. We must call no man *master* on earth, for one is our master in heaven, and all we are brethren. We must unite all our prudence and strength in its defence.

JESUS the infallible prophet, come from God, as a law giver, as well as a preacher : and the laws of his kingdom are strictly moral ; and derive their most endearing obligations from truths, motives and considerations brought to view in the gospel. The founding the morality of the Christian Religion upon the sure basis of supreme love to God, and benevolence to men, give additional weight to all its doctrines, precepts, promises and threatenings, and rendered them of the utmost importance to the christian life and to society at large. Yet we must expect that unbelievers, and men of corrupt minds, will persist in

their opposition for the same reason that they opposed and hated our blessed Lord, "the world," said he, "hateth me because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil." And where reason, talents, and arguments fail, they will have recourse to banter and ridicule; and we must be prepared to defend both the gospel and its ministers, against those fiery darts, and those will be most effectually quenched by the purity of our morals, the dignity of our conduct, and the sweetness of our tempers, when joined and enforced by manly reasoning upon the excellency of the laws and doctrines of christianity: a dispensation worthy of God to reveal, adapted to a fallen race, and providing for all the exigencies of mankind.

CANDOUR and benevolence are prominent features in the ministerial character; and the master we serve in the glorious cause we are engaged in, human imperfections and the mutual assistance we need from each other, oblige us to cultivate such a temper; and when it is accompanied with the meekness of wisdom it is in the sight of God of great price; and has an energy in it that no man can gainsay or resist.

CHRISTIANITY as a system, is evidently a glorious work of God, and should recommend its ministers to the world of mankind. Paul recommends Timothy to the christian church at Corinth, from this consideration, "see," says he, "that he be with you without fear for he worketh the work of the Lord." But the world in general are not sensible of the advantages they derive from the gospel. The benevolent principles of christianity, were they to operate only in their restraining influence, they would have a most happy effect upon men of all descriptions; but where they take hold of the heart, and get a seat there, the advantages to individuals and to society in general are beyond all human calculation; they insensibly form men to what they should be. They are and appear to be the sons of God without rebuke.

THE ruler is happy in seeing himself respected as the Minister of God for good, the subject is happy under the mild and wise administration of government, and leads a peaceable and quiet life in godliness and honesty.

WHERE christianity has been received as the religion of the country, I believe it has never failed of producing some good effects ; it has always laid a restraint upon the vices and licentious principles of fallen man, and the inhabitants in general have entertained sentiments and discovered a temper much more becoming rational beings and made a change much for the better. It has in general freed men from direct and gross idolatry, and led them to worship the only living and true God through a Mediator. This knowledge of God and Jesus Christ whom he sent, enlarges the mind, ennobles the soul, and elevates the thoughts far above what the simple light of nature or the fictions of paganism could ever inspire. As it is in its own nature practical, *the holy art of living to God on principle*, so it is admirably calculated to influence the heart, to regulate the life, and to mark the line of conduct with great precision.

THE death of Christ "*that frontispiece of christianity*," is an event the most affecting and the most astonishing that ever could take place among all the works of God, and it has a most powerful tendency to awaken the thoughtless, to convince the impenitent of the exceeding sinfulness of sin ; to encourage the humble penitent to seek a pardon, purchased at such a price ; such a method of forgiveness as the gospel reveals, while it revives the spirit of the contrite, it cherishes a hope which sweetens every earthly enjoyment ; assuages every sorrow, supports the meek under every trial, comforts them in the agonies of death, and brightens their prospects into futurity. From these sources of divine consolation, refreshing streams have been perpetually flowing in upon the christian church, which,

like the waters of *Horeb*, have followed them through the wilderness, to the heavenly Canaan.

THOUGH the good effects which the christian religion has had upon the temper and morals of nations who have received it as the religion of their country, has not been so great as might reasonably be expected from its nature and tendency, yet it is a fact we cannot deny, that it has at least meliorated the manners, tamed the savage temper, and softened the heart, before steeled against the sympathetic feelings of humanity, and has ever been favourable both to civil and religious liberty. The picture which St. Paul drew of the ancient Greeks and Romans was too true; he said, they were full of "murders, without natural affection, implacable and unmerciful;" but when these nations received the light of the glorious gospel, and experienced to any considerable degree the influences of its liberal and regenerating spirit, they seemed to be "translated out of the kingdom of darkness into marvellous light;" and we may venture to say, that such is the nature and tendency of the genuine principles of the christian religion, that in the same proportion in which they prevail, public happiness will be diffused; and were they uniformly to operate through the nations of the earth, they would give liberty and happiness to all the world. This is that rich treasure which is committed to our trust, how careful should we be, that we do nothing which may directly or in its consequences, tarnish its glory, frustrate its beneficent designs, or in any degree prevent the operation of its genuine principles. If we would not, we must act conscientiously upon the caution of our text, and give no just offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed.

My brethren, you are sensible that the ministry we have received to fulfil, contains the richest blessings God can bestow or man can receive. It is the *catholicism* of a diseased world; it has a remedy for every

mental disease ; it has a plaister for every sore ; its divine doctrines, its sacred maxims will make men wise to salvation ; and much of its divine efficacy depends, under God, upon our cautious, united and faithful administrations ; and we have every argument and inducement which can impress the mind of man, to act with prudence, honor and fidelity in so glorious a cause ; a cause which is the result of eternal council, so worthy of God, so beneficial to man, will be supported and carried into full execution, even if we should withhold a helping hand ; or if by our imprudence or misconduct should essentially injure the cause and strengthen the prejudices which mankind have already imbibed against it. But what then must be our reflections ! Or what must we expect from our Lord and master when he shall call us to give an account of our stewardship ! Surely we cannot expect the reward of the good and the faithful, but of the slothful and wicked servant. We cannot expect to shine having turned many to righteousness, as stars of distinguished lustre in the firmament of glory, but be reserved as wandering stars of baleful influence, for the blackness of darkness forever.

THAT the gospel has not had a more extensive spread ; that christianity in its purity and simplicity has not been more universally established in the earth, and that its genuine effects have not been more apparent, may be ascribed, at least in part, to the misconduct or unfaithfulness of its public teachers. Some have withheld the knowledge of the scriptures from their hearers, or retailed them out in scraps or in broken fragments, in a dead language they did not understand, and so have deprived them of the sincere milk of the word that they might grow thereby. Others have incumbered christianity with a medley of human inventions and useless ceremonies, teaching for doctrines of the gospel, the traditions and commandments of men, till they have made Christ's yoke which is easy, hard, and

his burden which is light, heavy. Others have called in the aid of the civil arm, and made imprisonments, confiscations, and the stake, the three fold cord with which they bind the consciences of free men, to blind obedience. Though, as a late author* observes “ we “ hope the burning times are over,” yet the intolerant spirit which kindled the fire of persecution, is not wholly extinct ; however, in this favoured land of science and free inquiry, it is on a rapid decline, and will, we hope, soon be buried in oblivion. And are there not some among us in the present day who corrupt the word of God by blending with it vain philosophy and subtle metaphysics, making such distinctions as, in their consequences, are shocking to common sense, which wound the sincere christian, and strengthen the prejudices in the already perverted understanding, against a religion, which like the leaves of the tree of life were for the healing of the nations ? Charity, which hopeth all things, forbids us to add that there are some who by their great imprudence, a levity of mind or immorality of conduct, have laid the ax at the root of the tree of life ; and while they are pretending that they are gathering and scattering its fruits with an impartial and liberal hand, are sapping its foundation. If there should be such strange and inconsistent characters found among the public teachers of religion at the present day, they will give just grounds of offence, and the ministry will be blamed, and so far as their influence may extend, the operations of the genuine principles of the gospel, will be obstructed.

WE infer from our subject not only the truth and importance of the christian religion, but that the ministers of the gospel are the most important order of men in the world. Though we are sinful men, men of like passions and infirmities with other men, yet, being possessed of ministerial furniture, and being found faithful and regularly put into the ministry, we

rise ambassadors from God to man, and are in Christ's stead to beseech men to be reconciled to God. Let us be thankful for the honor, and humble under a sense of our own unworthiness and deficiency, for who is sufficient for these things? Our sufficiency is of God, therefore let us gird up the loins, and go forth in the name of the Lord. And as a flood of infidelity and practical atheism threatens to corrupt this fair inheritance, and to deluge our land, we must unite and adopt the most probable means to stem the tide of disorganizing and demoralizing principles, and set our faces like a flint. Let us strip the gigantic monster of all his armour and disguise, by bringing forward evangelical truth in her full orb'd beauty and energy; for GREAT IS THE TRUTH AND IT WILL PREVAIL.

If we are not wanting to ourselves nor unfaithful in our work, we shall not be straitened in our God, and shall be made the greatest blessings to mankind. And we must not be discouraged, though we may not immediately see the fruit of our labours; the good seed which we have sown in tears may spring up and yield an hundred fold, when we are sleeping in the dust, and may add a lustre to the crown of our rejoicing when every faithful minister will be rewarded according to the fruit of his doings.

My brethren, the time is short; with many of us the day is far spent, and the night is at hand, and we must work the work of him who sent us; for the night cometh when no man can work. It seems but a little while ago, a few passing months, when we met in this house of God on our last anniversary convention, when we saw our dear, learned and good brother BELKNAP, whose devout heart and liberal hand, joined with us in the devotions and liberalities of the day; but we shall see his face *here* no more; we shall hear his voice no more, nor will his hand any more be extended with ours for the relief of the weeping widow and

the helpless orphan of deceased Ministers; he is gone and left this work with us. He is employed in higher services with those benevolent spirits already made perfect; and the voice speaketh to us on this wise, *Be ye also ready*. If we would be, we must in all things approve ourselves as the Ministers of God.

AND give me leave to say, that the private christian is deeply, if not equally concerned in the caution of the text. The irreligious lives of professing christians, have done as great injury to the cause of christianity as all that the infidel would have said or done; for all which they have said or done to the disparagement of christianity has been answered a thousand times, by merely reasoning, solid arguments, and by appealing to real facts, which, though they may blaspheme and ridicule, yet cannot deny. But when we see those who have named the name of Christ, not depart from iniquity, good God! what can we say! But father forgive them for they know not what they do: they bring a reproach upon our holy religion, which cannot be wiped off. They offend the godly and give occasion for the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme and the ministry is blamed. But of you who have honored us with your attendance, we hope better things, though we thus speak; yes we believe that you endeavour with us to adorn the doctrine of God we profess, in all things.

BUT a leading and laudable object of this meeting is, a free collection for the relief of the indigent widows of deceased Ministers and their penurious offspring. I need say nothing to recommend the practice; a recollection of the dignity of the gospel ministry, the glorious work our deceased brethren lived and died in, and the straitened circumstances in which most of those who have wholly devoted themselves to the work of the ministry have left their families, is enough to warm the heart, and open the hand of every one who is actuated by the benev-

olent principles of christianity. And though no one of those objects of our benevolence may be reduced to that truly distressing case of a prophet's widow in Israel, who cried to Elisha, and said, *Thy servant, my husband is dead, and thou knowest that thy servant feared the LORD, and the creditor is come ;* yet they all want the friendly aid of the hand of liberality to enable them to replenish the barrel of meal and the cruise of oil, that they may pay their honest debts and they and their children may live on the rest.



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